DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 134 038 FL 008 361

AUTHOR Flick, William C.; Gilbert, Glenn G.
TITLE Second Language Learning vs. Pidginization.
PUB DATE Mar 76
NOTE 9p.; Paper presented at the Convention of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (New York, New York, March 1976)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Determiners (Languages); Form Classes (Languages); Grammar; *Language Patterns; Language Research; Language Usage; Language Variation; *Linguistic Theory; Morphology (Languages); Phonology; *Pidgins; Plurals; *Second Language Learning; *Sociolinguistics; Verbs; Vocabulary

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the differences between second language learning and pidginization to better understand the mechanisms involved in each process. Current research suggests similarities between the two. Both are characterized by reduction and simplification. Grammatical transformations tend to be eliminated, along with inflectional markers of tense and plurality. Articles and gender/case distinctions are usually omitted, as well as the copula. Both are characterized by an extremely reduced lexicon and a simplified phonological system. Generally, they represent an attempt by speakers of a "source" language to approximate the rules and usage of a "target" language. Based on data obtained from a number of pidgin and creole languages, a theory viewing a pidgin language as merely a simplified form of a superstrate target language, or as the result of incomplete learning of a second language, is rejected. Due primarily to the extreme social conditions under which pidginization takes place and the resulting limited linguistic contact between native and target language groups, the formation of a pidgin language undergoes processes of development which are independent of the target language and which do not represent attempts to approximate the rules and usage of the target language. (Author/CLK)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

ED134038

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING VS. PIDGINIZATION

by William C. Flick and Glenn G. Gilbert, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale. To be read at TESOL Convention, New York City, Americana Hotel, March 1976. Manuscript completed February 23, 1976.

0. Introduction

This paper aims to clarify the differences between second language learning and pidginization in order to understand better the mechanisms that are involved in each process. Current research by John Schumann and David Smith would suggest strong similarities between these two processes. Smith (1972) distinguishes three functions of natural language: the communicative, integrative, and expressive functions. While the integrative and expressive functions pertain to the individual's social and psychological needs, the communicative function is restricted to the exchange of information. Smith's claim, enlarged upon by Schumann (1974; 1975), is that pidgin languages and the early stages of second language learning are primarily restricted to the communicative function, the integrative and expressive functions being fulfilled by the native language of the individual.

Schumann (1975) refers to the "pidginization hypothesis." According to his view, pidgin languages are seen as fossilized "approximative systems" (Nemser 1971), or "interlanguages" (Selinker 1972), corresponding to developmental stages in the second language learning process. Finally, the implication is that an examination of pidgin languages and the pidginization process will shed light on the strategies and processes by which a second language is acquired.

Admittedly, the two processes are similar in certain ways. They are both characterized by reduction and simplification. Thus, for example, grammatical transformations tend to be eliminated, along with inflectional markers of tense and plurality. Articles and gender/case distinctions are usually omitted, as well as the copula. Both processes are characterized by an extremely reduced lexicon and a simplified phonological system. Generally, they represent an attempt by speakers of a "source" language to approximate the rules and usage of a "target" language (cf. the distinction made in Gilbert ms. a; ms. b; Baron ms.).

Recent studies in the area of pidgin languages, however, reveal a number of differences between the learning of a second language and pidginization, which makes the analogy between the two processes more limited than the above research would suggest. These differences are related to the social conditions under which each process takes place; they reflect fundamental differences in the degree to which the second language learner and the potential pidgin speaker attempt to approximate the target language.

1. The Individual vs. the Group

The usual second language learning situation is a bilingual situation. It normally consists of a monolingual speaker attempting to learn a second language. However, as Whinnom (1971) points out, a pidgin language does not

12-06-16 FL008361

usually develop out of a simple bilingual situation. If there is only one source language, there will usually arise a kind of transitory bilingualism (cf. Jack Richards "immigrant variety of L_T" 1972: 174). A case in point is Cocoliche, an interlanguage that developed in Argentina between the Spanish speaking Argentinians and Italian immigrant workers. This contact language was characterized by numerous features of simplification and reduction, but a pidgin language never developed. The Italian workers eventually learned Standard Spanish. As Richards indicates, a similar phenomenon occurred in the United States; mixed languages developed among European immigrants, but pidgins failed to arise. The immigrants' descendents learned a standard form of English.

On the other hand, as has been repeatedly noted, pidginization presupposes multiple source languages. This is the case in New Guinea, with over seven hundred native languages, and in the Caribbean Islands, where pidgins arose in a situation that brought together slaves from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

Furthermore, whereas the typical second language learner is monolingual, the future speaker of a pidgin, coming from an area where several languages are already spoken, is usually a multilingual (Bickerton 1975: 174). Thus, the future pidgin speaker will bring to the task of language learning a different type of learning strategy than that of the monolingual; he will have more general hypotheses based on those features common to all the languages he knows.

Another point brought out by Bickerton's argument and suggested by our previous discussion is that second language learning is an individual phenomenon; by contrast, pidginization is a group phenomenon. This is emphasized by John Reinecke (1969) when he talks of the distinction between "makeshift languages of groups" and "makeshift languages of individuals."

What are the consequences of this basic difference? Firstly, second language learners do not form a closed linguistic community, as pidgin speakers normally do (i.e., second language learners seldom speak to each other in the target language). Secondly, the learning of a second language is a "conscious and consciously directed process" (Bickerton 1975: 176-178). We might add that it is consciously directed toward the target language, whereas a pidgin is only directed at several steps removed, if at all, toward any target language.

The second language learner's interlanguage represents a relatively transient stage in the learning process that undergoes continual "correction" and development until some close approximation of the target language has been reached. A pidgin language, representing a closed linguistic community, is continually under the influence of other factors, is much less affected by the corrective influence of the target language, and urdergoes a process of independent development.

A good example of this difference is provided by Bazaar Malay, a pidgin which arose in the Dutch East Indies. It is not a simplified form or an incomplete learning of Dutch, the "target" language, but rather it is a simplified form of Malay. When it expanded into present-day Indonesian, it followed a completely independent course of development, not at all in the direction of Dutch (Wurm 1971a).

2. Relations between Social Groups

This tendency of pidgin languages to undergo some form of independent development is one of their essential features. It is due to the nature of the contact situation, specifically to the degree of social distance between the native and target language groups (cf. the interesting interpretation of Schermerhorn 1970 in Schumann 1975). The typical contact situation favorable to pidginization involves a relatively small, transient, and dominant minority group representing the target language, and a large subordinate native language group representing a wide variety of language backgrounds.

Pidginization presupposes great social distance between the source language and target language groups. Consequently, the language and culture of the dominant group is largely inaccessible to the future pidgin speaker. However as Richards (1972) points out, in the typical second language situation social assimilation is at least theoretically possible.

The two situations thus differ widely in the type and frequency of language contact, in the degree of exposure to the corrective influence of the target language (what Bickerton 1975: 173 calls the "correction cycle"), and in the motivation and attitude of the learner toward the target language. Although these same factors also obviously affect the second language learner (see Schumann 1975 and the literature cited there), we would like to argue that the difference is more than a mere matter of degree. The relations between the contact languages in the two situations are fundamentally different and produce radically different results.

3. Relations between Source Language and Target Language

In a recent study at the Center for English as a Second Language at Southern Illinois University, sixteen native speakers of Spanish were interviewed and an error analysis was performed on their English. It was found that even among beginning students, whose ratio of errors to words utteredwas 33 percent, the number of unintelligible utterances was less than 1 percent (Flick ms.). A pidgin language on the other hand is unintelligible to the speakers of the target language (Whinnom 1971: 106; Wurm 1971b). In fact, as Wurm (1971b) notes, native speakers of English experience considerable difficulty in learning the New Guinea pidgin.

The essential point is this: In a second language learning situation, the target language never ceases to be the model for approximation; the interlanguage of the second language learner represents a transient, unstable stage in a series of successive approximations to the target language. In the situation of pidgin formation, with extreme social distance between the groups and severely limited linguistic contact, the target language is used as a model of approximation only to a very limited extent. Thus, as mentioned earlier, Bazaar Malay of the Dutch East Indies was a closer approximation to Malay than to Dutch (Wurm 1971a).

Wurm (1971a) maintains that in the formation of New Guinea pidgin, English has played a relatively minor role. This is due to the fact that in a typical pidgin situation the most prevalent use of the pidgin is not for communication between the native groups and the socially dominant target group, but between the linguistically diverse native groups themselves. In the case of New Guinea pidgin Wurm (1971a) clearly shows that it arose and developed primarily as a means of inter-group communication between the natives. In this

light, Smith's (1972) claim that pidgin languages are restricted solely to the communicative function seems extremely doubtful (as was noted already by Alfred Opubor and A.B. Hudson in their commentary to Smith's paper, printed in the same volume).

The result of limited linguistic contact and limited use of the target language as a model for approximation is the tendency for pidgin languages to undergo a process of development which is largely independent of the target language. Some examples:

Jay Edwards (1974) noticed a tendency in pidgin formation to select elements not in an attempt to simplify or approximate the target language, but in order to incorporate into the pidgin common elements from the native languages of the future pidgin speakers, regardless of the degree of complexity. Thus, it has been noted that most of the Melanesian languages of New Guinea have a distinction between the inclusive and exclusive in their pronoun systems; and this distinction exists in the pidgin as well (Dutton 1973). A separate form for dual and trial number in the pronouns is also common in New Guinean languages (Wurm 1971b), and these have been adopted into the pidgin.

Thus, for the one personal pronoun 'we' in English, New Guinea pidgin has the "complicated" array of forms:

mipela	'we' (exclusive)
yumi	'we' (inclusive)
mitupela	'we two' (exclusive)
yumitupela	'we two' (inclusive)
mitripela	'we three' (exclusive)
yumitripela	'we three' (inclusive)

(This can be extended to indicate four, five, etc.)

The direction here is not toward simplification or approximation of the target language. In this case, second language learning is not taking place at all; it is an example of borrowing, in which the lexical items are burrowed from English and incorporated into a structure and function which is Melanesian.

Another example of the mechanism of independent development is revealed by recent changes that are occurring in the tense system of New Guinea pidgin. In line with the expansion and development that characterizes the change from a pidgin to a creole language, New Guinea pidgin is in the process of developing a future tense marker for the verb. This particle, originally from the English time adverb bye and bye, is becoming an obligatory verbal prefix (Sankoff and Laberge 1974). A direct approximation to English is unlikely.

Peter Muhlhausler, in a large-scale study of the processes of word formation in New Guinea pidgin (ms. 44), rejects the view that pidgins are simplified versions of the target language. According to him, "there is a substantial difference in the systems underlying word formation in the two languages which cannot be explained exclusively in terms of simplification" (ms. 44). More generally, he concludes that "the data do not support the view that the structure of English and New Guinea pidgin are

identical or even very similar. There is also no support for the view that lexical structures of New Guinea pidgin are a simplification of English structures" (ms. 52).

Even superficially, pidgin languages contain many characteristics which seem to be infrequently used by second language learners, such as reduplication and multifunctionality of lexical items. Note for example the use of the word gras 'grass' in New Guinea pidgin:

gras	'grass'
gras bilong hed	'hair'
gras bilong fes	'beard'
gras bilong maus	'moustache'
gras nogut	'weeds'

(Hall 1966)

4. Summary

In light of such evidence we would reject a theory which views a pidgin language as merely a simplified form of a superstrate target language, or as the result of incomplete learning of a second language. Due primarily to the extreme social conditions under which pidginization takes place and the resulting limited linguistic contact between native and target language groups, the formation of a pidgin language undergoes processes of development which are independent of the target language and which do not represent attempts to approximate the rules and usage of the target language. A pidgin is not a fossilized stage in the process of second language learning; it involves processes of formation radically different from those of the second language learning process.

One final point should be mentioned here. Once a pidgin language becomes stabilized, it sometimes undergoes an expansion and development resulting ultimately in a creole language. The latter is usually due to the appearance of a generation of speakers for whom the pidgin represents a first, or native, language (Sankoff and Laberge 1974). Under certain conditions, involving a decrease in the social distance between the creole speakers and the dominant target language group, a series of inter-languages may develop which represent successive approximations to the target language. DeCamp (1971) and Taylor (1971) refer to this phenomenon as the "post-creole continuum,"a situation which more closely resembles that of second language learning (Bickerton 1975:176). It would be a mistake however, for the reasons we have discussed, to view the native languages, the pidgin/creole language, and the target language as being on the same continuum. Jan Voorhoeve (1971) points out that once a creole develops and comes into contact with the standard (target) language, we must no longer think in terms of contact between native and standard languages. A new and different type of situation has arisen.

We can represent the relations between native languages, pidgin/creole, and standard language as indicated in Figure 1.

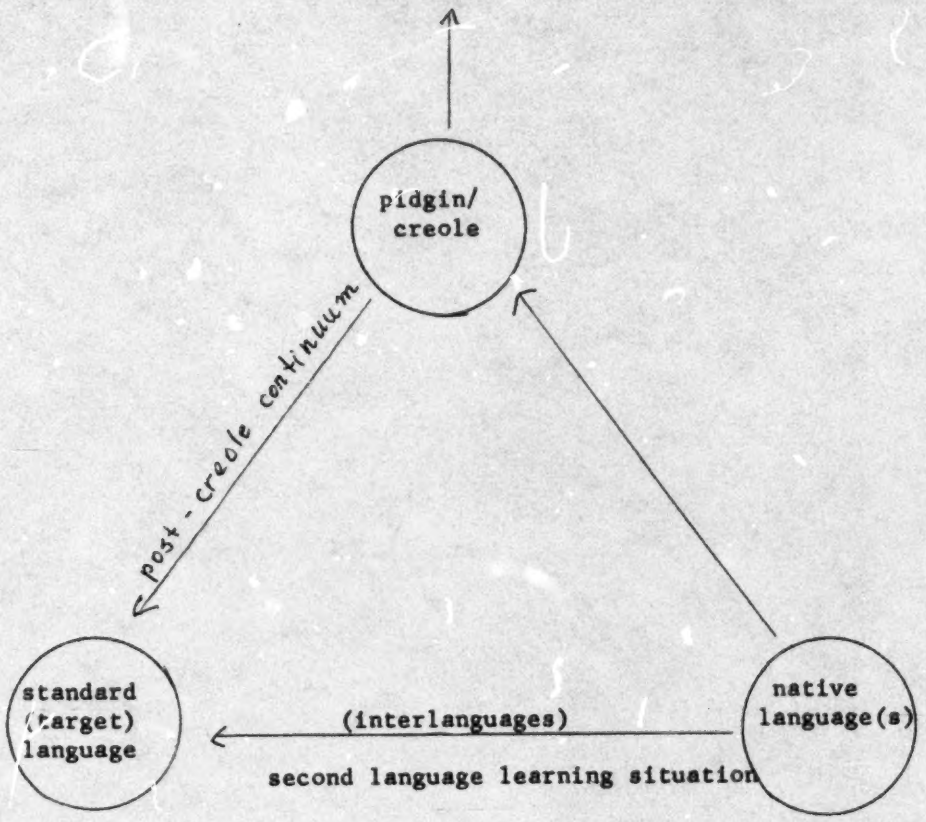

Figure 1

As the arrows indicate, a pidgin language, whether or not it eventually becomes a creole and enters a post-creole continuum, does not proceed along a straight-line continuum in the direction of the target language. Without recognizing this fundamental difference between the two processes, any attempt to draw an analogy between them is likely to be misleading.

REFERENCES

Baron, Naomi S. ms. Trade Jargons and Pidgins: A Functionalist Approach. unpublished paper read at the Jan. 1975 International Conference on Pidgin and Creole Languages, Honolulu, Hawaii.

Bickerton, Derek. 1975. Dynamics of a Creole System. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, England.

DeCamp, David. 1971. Introduction: The Study of Pidgin and Creole Languages. In Hymes, ed. 1971.

DeCamp, David and Ian F. Hancock, eds. 1974. Pidgins and Creoles: Current Trends and Prospects. Georgetown University Press: Washington, D.C.

Dutton, Thomas Edward. 1973. Conversational New Guinea Pidgin. Special Publication of the Dept. of Linguistics, Research School of Pacific Studies, The Australian National University: Canberra.

Edwards, Jay. 1974. African Influences on the English of San Andrés Island, Colombia. In DeCamp and Hancock, eds. 1974.

Flick, William C. ms. Developmental and Interference Errors in the Acquisition of English by Adult Spanish Speakers. unpublished paper, Aug. 1975, Dept. of Linguistics, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale.

Gilbert, Glenn G. ms. a. Pidgin German Spoken by Foreign Workers in West Germany: The Definite Article. In Richard Day and Derek Bickerton, eds. Proceedings of the 1975 International Conference on Pidgin and Creole Languages [exact title to be determined later]. University Press of Hawaii: Honolulu. (forthcoming)

_____ ms. b. "Neues Öl für Alte Lampen: Die Auseinandersetzung zwischen Hugo Schuchardt und Adolpho Coelho über die Simplifikation in den Pidgin- und Kreolsprachen. In C.H. Molony, W. Stölting, and H. Zobl, eds. Proceedings of the 1975 Essen Conference on German in Contact with Other Languages [exact title to be determined later]. (forthcoming)

Hall, Robert A., Jr. 1966. Pidgin and Creole Languages. Cornell University Press: Ithaca, New York.

Hudson, A.B. 1972. Comments. In Smith and Shuy, eds. 1972.

Hymes, Dell, ed. 1971. Pidginization and Creolization of Languages. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, England.

Mühlhäusler, Peter. ms. The Functional Possibilities of Lexical Bases in New Guinea Pidgin. unpublished paper read at the Jan. 1975 International Conference on Pidgin and Creole Languages, Honolulu, Hawaii.

Nemser, W.J. 1971. Approximative Systems of Foreign Language Learners. International Review of Applied Linguistics 9, 2. 115-123.

Opubor, Alfred E. Comments. In Smith and Shuy, eds. 1972.

Reinecke, John E. 1969. Language and Dialect in Hawaii: A Sociolinguistic History to 1935. (edited by Stanley M. Tsuzaki) University Press of Hawaii: Honolulu.

Richards, Jack C. 1972. Social Factors, Interlanguage, and Language Learning. Language Learning 22,2.

Sankoff, Gillian and Suzanne Laberge. 1974. On the Acquisition of Native Speakers by a Language. In DeCamp and Hancock, eds. 1974.

Schermerhorn, R.A. 1970. Comparative Ethnic Relations: A Framework for Theory and Research. Random House: New York.

Schumann, John H. 1974. The Implications of Interlanguage, Pidginization and Creolization for the Study of Adult Language Acquisition. TESOL Quarterly 8. 145-152.

_____ 1975. Second Language Acquisition: The Pidginization Hypothesis. unpublished dissertation, School of Education, Harvard University.

Sebeok, Thomas A. et al, eds. 1971. Current Trends in Linguistics. Vol. 8: Linguistics in Oceania. Mouton: The Hague.

Selinker, Larry. 1972. Interlanguage. International Review of Applied Linguistics, 10, 3. 209-231.

Smith, David M. 1972. Some implications for the Social Status of Pidgin Languages. In Smith and Shuy, eds. 1972.

Smith, David M. and Roger W. Shuy, eds. 1972. Sociolinguistics in Cross-Cultural Analysis, Georgetown University Press: Washington, D.C.

Taylor, Douglas. 1971. Grammatical and Lexical Affinities of Creoles. In Hymes, ed. 1971.

Voorhoeve, Jan. 1971. A Note on Reduction and Expansion in Grammar. In Hymes, ed. 1971.

Whinnom, Keith. 1971. Linguistic Hybridization and the 'Special Case' of Pidgins and Creoles. In Hymes, ed. 1971.

Wurm, Stefan A. 1971a. Pidgins, Creoles, and Lingue Franche. In Sebeok et al., eds. 1971.

_____ 1971b. New Guinea Highlands Pidgin: Course Materials. A.H. and A.W. Reed: Sydney, Australia. (Pacific Linguistics, Series D, no. 3)